

United Presbyterian Church
(Masonic Hall/White Church)
High Street and Ash Alley
Saltsburg
Indiana County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5434

HABS
PA,
32-SALT,
23-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service

Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(Masonic Hall, White Church)

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PA,
32-SALT,
23-

- Location: Southwest corner of High Street and Ash Alley, Saltsburg, Conemaugh Township, Indiana County, Pennsylvania.
- Present Owner: Williamson Club Inc.
- Present Use: Masonic Hall.
- Significance: This simple, gable-front frame structure served as one of the first permanent church buildings for local Presbyterian worship, a popular denomination in Saltsburg.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1870.
2. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands, historically lot No. 60. Reference is to the Recorder of Deeds Office of the County of Indiana, Pennsylvania.

1850 Deed of Release, February 1, 1850, Volume 16, Page 388.
Andrew Boggs, Elizabeth Drum, Mary Miles
TO
Moses Hart

1857 Deed May 13, 1857, Volume 23, Page 237.
Moses Hart
TO
Elizabeth White

1860 Deed February 11, 1860, Volume 25, Page 632.
Elizabeth White
TO

Daniel Rhea, et al., trustees for the United Presbyterian Church

1984 Deed July 6, 1984, Volume 854, Page 462.
Trustees for the United Presbyterian Church
TO
Williamson Club Inc.

3. Original plans and construction: No original plans or drawings have been located, but it appears the one-story, rectangular mass is largely unchanged.
4. Alterations and additions: The rear/west-entrance stairway and door were added at an unknown date; the transom above the main doorway has been covered with a wood panel.

- B. Historical Context: The United Presbyterian church, initially called the Associate Presbyterian Church, was one of the earliest congregations with its own building in Saltsburg. Its first building, a brick structure that dated from 1843, was replaced when the present building was erected in 1870 for \$3,000. This coincides with the transferral of the Saltsburg Academy to the Presbyterian Church and its renaming as the Memorial Institute; while this church was being built, services were held in the school (Stewart, 339).

The Associate Presbyterian sect of the Presbyterian church was originally formed in Scotland as the Seceder Church, which broke from the Church of Scotland in 1743. In the United States this branch was called the Associate Presbyterian, and it was especially strong in South Carolina. The group was shortlived, however, and it eventually merged with the United Presbyterian branch.

Olivor Katz served solely as pastor of this congregation in 1871. Masons were established in Saltsburg as early as 1868, though they did not acquire this building until 1984.

For additional context, twenty-one reports on other buildings in Saltsburg may be consulted, as well as overview histories of the town of Saltsburg (HABS No. PA-5438) and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666). See also, Sara Amy Leach, ed., Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg (Washington, DC: Historica American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The one-story, three-bay by four-bay frame structure is a simple gable-front block highlighted by simple wood ornamentation found on the window and door surrounds, and in the stained-glass windows.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: About 30' x 50' (Sanborns).
2. Foundation: Stone, sharply banked.
3. Walls: Clapboard with vinyl siding.
4. Structural system: Wood frame.
5. Chimneys: An exterior brick chimney is located near the southeast corner.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The primary entrance is in the central bay of the east facade. A modern double wood door is framed by architrave trim that flares at the top and rises into a pediment form--to the same height as the flanking windows; the two-part transom above the door contains recessed panels, although originally it was glazed.

Side doors located on the north and south facades had similar pediments, though the one above the former door has been removed.
 - b. Windows: Window surrounds match that of the High Street doorway, with pediments and slightly battered "pilasters." The pattern of lights on the High Street windows is one large pane with several small panes around its periphery, in a Queen Anne style; the sash are double hung.

The pediment window is octagonal and is framed by abstracted Classical molding in the shape of a flat-based octagon.

- 7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Low-pitch gable-front with asphalt shingles.
 - b. Eaves: Slim boxed eaves, slightly extended.

- C. Site: Located on the southwest corner of High Street and Ash Alley, the east-facing building is banked into the steep grade of the site, which provides an excellent view down the hill to the Conemaugh River. Across High Street is the former Academy building.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Old Views and maps:

The collection of the Saltsburg Branch, Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana County, Stone House Museum, contains numerous historic images.

Beers, F.W. Atlas of Indiana County. New York: F.W. Beers and Co., 1871.

Johnson, George B., and Palmer, Ann. Saltsburg--The Way It Was--An Appreciation. Indiana, Pa.: A.G. Halldin Publishing Co., 1986.

Peelor, David, and Barker, W. "Map of Indiana County, Pennsylvania." North Hector, New York: 1856.

"Saltsburg, Pa." New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Co. Ltd., February 1886; New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Ltd., October 1891, January 1897, July 1903; New York: Sanborn Map Company, April 1909, February 1927.

- B. Primary and unpublished sources:

Indiana County, Pennsylvania, deed books and tax records.

- C. Secondary and published sources:

Arms, C.T., and White, E. 1745-1880, History of Indiana County, Pennsylvania.

Newark, Ohio: J. A. Caldwell, 1880.

Berringer, Gloria, ed. Canal Days Sesquicentennial: 1838-1988. No publisher, 1988.

Biographical and Historical Cyclopedia of Indiana and Armstrong Counties. Philadelphia: John M. Gresham and Co., 1891; reprinted 1982.

Johnson, George. Saltsburg and the Pennsylvania Canal. Historic Saltsburg, 1984.

McCullough, Robert, and Leuba, Walter. The Pennsylvania Main Line Canal. York, Pa.: American Canal and Transportation Center, 1973.

Melton, J. Gordon. Encyclopedia of American Religions. Vol. 1. Wilmington, N.C.: McGrath Publishing Co., no date; 104.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory, "Western Division of the Pennsylvania Canal: Indiana and Westmoreland Counties." 1979/82.

Stewart, J.T. Indiana County, Pennsylvania: Her People, Past and Present. Chicago: F.W. Beers and Co., 1913.

Wallner, Peter A. "Politics and Public Works: A Study of the Pennsylvania Canal System, 1825-1857." Ph.D diss., Pennsylvania State University, June 1973.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was conducted by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record in cooperation with the America's Industrial Heritage Project under the directorship of Randy Cooley; AIHP is an undertaking of the National Park Service, based in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. Recorded under the direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, the project was completed during summer 1988 at the HABS field office in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Project leader was Alison K. Hoagland, senior HABS historian; field supervisor was Dorothy Burlingame, University of Vermont; project historian, Kristin Belz, University of Virginia. Large-format photography is by David Ames. Editing of the final report was done by Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

This report was completed as part of a larger project documenting two canal towns--

Saltsburg, on the Western Division of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal, and Alexandria, on the Juniata Division--flanking the Allegheny Divide. Twenty-one reports on other buildings in Saltsburg, an overview history of Saltsburg (HABS No. PA-5438), and of canal town development in Pennsylvania (HABS No. PA-5666) are part of the HABS/HAER collection. Twenty-two reports on buildings in Alexandria (Huntingdon County) and an overview history of Alexandria (HABS No. PA-5407) are also available. Results of the project were published as Two Historic Pennsylvania Canal Towns: Alexandria and Saltsburg, Sara Amy Leach, editor (Washington, DC: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, March 1989).